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No. 451

The Widow Might

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

NATHANIEL LADD FOSTER

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New and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

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JAN 11 1923

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Mr. Upton Jenkins

Mr. Peter Peters

Mrs. Chase

Julia

The Widow Might

SCENE: MRS. CHASE'S *sitting-room in her city apartment. Entrance door at right center; two doors at left, one leading into bedroom and the other into bathroom. Bookcase at rear, small desk at right, with telephone on it. Divan at right center. Table and chairs.*

AT RISE *of curtain* MRS. CHASE *is discovered in a dainty and alluring pajama suit trying to stand on her hands. She is a good-looking woman of about thirty-five.*

TIME: *Morning.*

(Enter JULIA, *right center. She is middle-aged, with a rather inquisitive, eager expression.)*

JULIA. Mr. Jenkins has called, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. Mr. Jenkins?

JULIA. *(Reading card)* Mr. Up—— Mr. Upton Jenkins, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. Heavens! How inopportune. *(Sits in chair.)* I wonder why he has called at this hour.

JULIA. If you don't mind my saying so, he seemed as you might say flustered, and breathing a bit fast.

MRS. CHASE. Well, I suppose I must see him. It's a little annoying, just as I seemed to be getting it. I must be able to walk on my hands or I can't get that part. Of course, it's only small-time stuff, but for a poor widow with a lovely daughter every little bit helps. Julia, would you just hold my ankles

a moment? I want to try it once more. Then I'll change. I must get this.

JULIA. *(Doubtfully)* He seemed in quite a hurry, ma'am.

*(*JULIA *reluctantly grasps her mistress' ankles, and* MRS. CHASE *with her help stands on her hands. At the moment* JENKINS *enters, looks at the scene in amazement, and backs hastily out.)*

MRS. CHASE. *(Whose back was turned)* Who was that? *(Rises.)*

JULIA. Mr. Jenkins.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, Lord! Do you think he recognized me?

JULIA. I can't say for certain, ma'am; but he didn't stay long, so maybe he didn't.

MRS. CHASE. *(Reflectively)* He has never seen me upside down before. I wonder if I look bad that way. In any case, I think it's better that he should not know what I'm doing yet. Julia, you must go and excuse yourself and tell him it was a friend of yours who is practicing for the circus. Say I've just got up and will be ready to receive him in a few minutes. He can wait here.

JULIA. All right, ma'am. *(Starts to go.)*

MRS. CHASE. And Julia.

JULIA. *(Turning back)* Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. I wanted to ask you—that is, do you think you would like to stay with me if—that is, if I should get married?

JULIA. Oh, ma'am, are you going to get married?

MRS. CHASE. Yes, I might.

JULIA. Who, ma'am?

MRS. CHASE. I don't know yet. It may be several.

JULIA. Excuse me, ma'am, but isn't that against the law?

MRS. CHASE. I mean, it may be any one of several.

JULIA. Oh, yes, ma'am, I'd stay. And if you'll excuse my saying so, I think it would be a good thing for us both. And then there's Katherine, the blessed lamb.

MRS. CHASE. *(Reflectively)* Yes, there's Katherine. That's one reason. I wouldn't want her to be married first. A widow makes such a poor mother-in-law.

JULIA. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. You may show Mr. Jenkins in.

JULIA. *(Goes out)* I wonder if it's he.

*(*MRS. CHASE *goes into bedroom and* JULIA *soon re-enters, followed by* JENKINS. *The latter is a rather thin, quick-moving, slightly pompous man of about forty-five, with short side whiskers. He is dressed in a dark business suit, and carries derby hat in hand.)*

JENKINS. *(Apologetically)* I trust I haven't disturbed your mistress. I realize that this is an unusual hour for a call.

JULIA. *(Dubiously)* Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir.

JENKINS. *(Nervously)* And, Julia. Can you tell me whether Mr.—er—Mr.—er—Peters has called recently? Has he been here this morning?

JULIA. No, sir. He was here last night, sir.

JENKINS. Last night! I feared so. And can you tell me—that is—I was waiting to see him at the club, and wondered why he did not turn up. I suppose he was here pretty late?

JULIA. I don't know, sir. I went to bed at twelve.

JENKINS. My God! Excuse me, I mean, Good Lord.

JULIA. I'm sorry, sir, but I couldn't help it.

JENKINS. Help it? Oh, no—of course not. I

certainly didn't expect you to send Mr. Peters home. I was just wondering. *(Hesitates.)* I suppose, Julia, you haven't happened to hear anything that would indicate—that is, you haven't seen any indication that would indicate—I mean—dear me— I must make myself clearer. You haven't observed anything that would lead you to suppose that she has any serious thoughts in respect to Mr. Peters?

JULIA. Well, Mr. Jenkins, begging your pardon. Of course I know my place, I hope, and never hear anything that's not meant for my ears—if I can help it. But I did hear her say my dear Peter, or else my dear Mr. Peters. I'm not just sure.

JENKINS. Dear me. How inconvenient that his first name is Peter. Still, it can't be helped.

JULIA. No, sir, I don't suppose it can.

JENKINS. *(Almost blushingly, as* JULIA *turns to go out)* And there's one other thing, Julia. *(Fumbles in his pocketbook nervously.)* I've been coming here for quite a long time.

JULIA. *(Looking hopefully at pocketbook)* You might say so, sir, although I'm sure there's no one been more welcome.

JENKINS. *(Eagerly)* You think so? That's just what I was wondering. *(Produces five dollar bill and hands it to her awkwardly.)* I've been meaning to give you some little remembrance for some time. I had intended it for last Christmas, but it slipped my mind. You have had to go to the door to answer my ring a good many times, and I wanted to do a little something for you—not much, to be sure. I wish I could make it more.

JULIA. Thank you, sir, I wish you could—I mean, thank you.

JENKINS. *(Taking out another five dollar bill)* On second thought, Julia, I think I'll add this. There are so many more things you can get for ten dollars.

JULIA. I'm sure I can't thank you enough, sir. I

never expected anything. If I hear the mistress say anything that you might like to hear—I mean, of course, without listening, as you might say——

JENKINS. Of course. Of course. I quite understand. I'm sure I'll appreciate it. You certainly are a very bright girl, to be sure.

JULIA. Yes, sir. And thank you again, sir. *(Goes out.)*

MRS. CHASE. *(Entering left center. She is dressed in becoming morning gown)* Good-morning, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. *(Turning hastily)* Good-morning, good-morning, Mrs. Chase. It is assuredly a delightful morning, is it not?

MRS. CHASE. *(Smiling)* I suppose it is, although it's raining.

JENKINS. So it is, to be sure. I had quite forgotten. *(With sudden inspiration.)* Perhaps—er—perhaps, Mrs. Chase, it's because it always seems bright and fair—that is, you make everything seem fairly bright—I mean——

MRS. CHASE. *(Coming to his rescue)* Why, I've never known you to be so gallant. And on a rainy morning, too. How nice of you to come in the morning.

JENKINS. I must apologize for coming at this hour, but—well, I felt it was urgent. You see——

MRS. CHASE. Oh, you're going on that California trip, after all?

JENKINS. Oh, no. It's not that. Nothing like that, in fact. Quite different, I assure you. *(Walks nervously up and down.)*

MRS. CHASE. *(With pretended alarm)* You've come to tell me you've got some fatal disease. I felt a foreboding this morning, and yesterday I was reading a story by Conan Doyle, I think it was—about a man who felt a curious tingling sensation in the tip of his tongue, and realized that it was the

beginning of a fatal disease. Is your tongue tingling? Please put it out. Let me see.

JENKINS. No, no, Mrs. Chase. I'm as sound as ever, except——

MRS. CHASE. Except what? *Please* put out your tongue. I can't tell you how concerned I am.

JENKINS. *(Reluctantly putting out tongue)* There's really nothing, I assure you. But I'm very happy that you should be concerned.

MRS. CHASE. Now, please, I can't see it plainly if you continue to talk. There. That's better. The tip seems very red. I wonder if that's a bad sign?

JENKINS. I'm sure I'm quite well. But I'm so glad you care. I suppose—I suppose you can have no idea why I came at this unusual hour.

MRS. CHASE. Not an idea, now that I find you perhaps have no fatal disease.

JENKINS. It's—it's——well—— *(Desperately.)* I must speak. I want you to marry me, Amelia.

MRS. CHASE. *(With appearance of surprise)* How stupid of me. I ought to have known. Really, I'm discouraged at myself. I might as well never have been married.

JENKINS. *(Eagerly and nervously)* Then I may hope?

JENKINS. Hope? About what? Oh, you must forgive me. I was thinking of poor dear Fred. This is the anniversary of his first proposal.

JENKINS. How inopportune. Another time then, dear Mrs. Chase. I should not wish to intrude upon your——

MRS. CHASE. No. No. Not at all. I wasn't sentimentalizing. Our married life was far from perfect. Dear Fred's disposition.

JENKINS. I think I may say without undue vanity that my disposition is of the best. Moreover, I have acquired a considerable fortune.

MRS. CHASE. How interesting. I didn't know. I

seldom give money a thought. Still, it's nice to have. How much have you got?

JENKINS. *(Surprised)* Really, I don't exactly—I didn't refer to it except incidentally. I may say, however, that I'm worth at least three hundred thousand.

MRS. CHASE. How splendid! Let's see, that would make just a hundred and fifty thousand apiece.

JENKINS. I beg your pardon?

MRS. CHASE. Oh! Of course you might not intend to divide it at all.

JENKINS. *(Somewhat bewildered, but still eager)* Why, yes—— That is, I'll make some arrangement that will be entirely satisfactory, I'm sure. Probably not an equal division.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, no! I should hardly feel justified in taking more than half.

JENKINS. *(Much embarrassed)* Well—er—I didn't mean—— That is, I thought perhaps one-third——

MRS. CHASE. Could you get along on that?

JENKINS. I thought perhaps you could. I suppose your late husband left you something?

MRS. CHASE. Yes, about fifty thousand dollars. I suppose it would be only fair to divide that, too. Shall we separate it into thirds?

JENKINS. Oh, I wasn't meaning to suggest anything of that sort. I——

MRS. CHASE. No, of course not. I have an idea! We could place my fortune in trust for the children, and use yours for ourselves.

JENKINS. *(Embarrassed)* The children?

MRS. CHASE. Oh, I mean your children and mine—not ours, in case——

JENKINS. Of course, to be sure. In case—— Then you mean you've decided to accept?

MRS. CHASE. Oh, please give me a little time,

Upton. I was just thinking of the possibilities of the future, in case I were able——

JENKINS. *(Bracing himself)* You mean there's someone else you are considering? *(Walking about.)* I had feared it.

MRS. CHASE. But I haven't said there's any one.

JENKINS. *(Joyfully)* My dear Amelia! I'm so glad.

MRS. CHASE. Please, Upton. You are so impetuous this morning. I must have time to consider. The whole thing is so unexpected.

JENKINS. Tell me one thing. Is Mr. Peters——

MRS. CHASE. Mr. Peters? Why, do you think he wants to marry me?

JENKINS. *(Regretting his mistake)* No, no. Certainly not. Not at all.

MRS. CHASE. How do you know he doesn't want to marry me?

JENKINS. You must excuse me, Amelia. I'm very nervous and excited this morning. Of course he wants to marry you.

MRS. CHASE. You're sure? Has he said anything to you about it? What did he say?

JENKINS. *(In despair)* No, indeed. I didn't mean anything like that. I just meant that any man must want to marry you.

MRS. CHASE. Oh. Then he does, doesn't he?

JENKINS. Speaking about Mr. Peters. There are certain considerations I ought to point out with respect to him. As you know, he is a bachelor used to his own ways, and used to being considered first in everything. I fear the fact of your former marriage might tend to make things complicated. He would continually feel that you were comparing him to your late husband.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, there's no comparison.

JENKINS. You mean——

MRS. CHASE. I'm sure Peter's ways will be——

JENKINS. *(Alarmed)* *Will* be?

MRS. CHASE. I mean *would* be, of course. And now, Upton, I feel that I must be alone. You cannot know a woman's feelings in such a crisis. I hope you understand how much I appreciate the honor you have done me.

JENKINS. And you will give my suit serious consideration, my dear Mrs.—I mean, Amelia?

MRS. CHASE. Most serious, I can assure you.

JENKINS. And I may hope?

MRS. CHASE. *(Smiling enigmatically)* I can see no objection.

JENKINS. *(Making awkward attempt to kiss her hand, and then turning hastily to door with hat in hand)* Good-bye—Amelia.

MRS. CHASE. Good-bye.

(As he goes out, JULIA *enters right center, bearing a tray containing a card. He makes an impulsive attempt to read card, but is prevented by* JULIA, *and desists guiltily.)*

JULIA. Mr. Peters is calling, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. Mr. Peters? How astonishing! Julia, what day is this?

JULIA. I think it's the twelfth of October.

MRS. CHASE. Is that any holiday, or anyone's birthday, or anything, Julia?

JULIA. I think, ma'am, if you'll excuse my saying so, it's your birthday, and something about Columbus, too.

MRS. CHASE. It can't be my birthday. Yes, I fear it is. Heavens! How time is racing.

JULIA. If you'll excuse me, ma'am, I will say as how you don't look a day over twenty-five.

MRS. CHASE. *(Delighted)* Julia, you are a jewel. Let me see, how long has it been since your wages were raised?

JULIA. Two years last July, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. Then, if you'll remind me on the fourth of next July, I will arrange for an advance. It's so much easier to remember if advances and such things are made on anniversaries.

JULIA. That's very kind, I'm sure. Although I will say I have a very strong memory for such things. Shall I show Mr. Peters in?

MRS. CHASE. Dear me, of course. I had almost forgotten. *(Notices that* JULIA *hesitates.)* Is there anything you want to say, Julia? Don't hesitate if there is. You've been with me for a long time.

JULIA. If you'll excuse me, ma'am, I was just thinking that, as for me, I like Mr. Jenkins the best.

MRS. CHASE. *(Interested)* Really. And just why, Julia?

JULIA. Well, I don't know. He seems more settled down like, and steadier, and I should think like enough more generous.

MRS. CHASE. Oh! Has he given any demonstration of his generosity?

JULIA. *(Hastily)* I didn't mean that, ma'am—— Not to speak of. But he seems that way.

MRS. CHASE. Very well, Julia. You may show Mr. Peters in.

JULIA. Yes, ma'am. *(Exits, right rear.)*

MRS. CHASE. *(To herself)* I wonder what Peter can have in mind. He can't know it's my birthday, I hope. No, he's much too tactful.

(Enter JULIA, *followed by* PETERS. *He is a well-preserved man of the world, about forty, with a very slight tendency to stoutness, but still of an athletic figure.)*

JULIA. Mr. Peters, ma'am. *(Goes out.)*

PETERS. *(Presenting her with large bunch of violets, and bending gracefully over her hand)* For you, *donna mia.*

MRS. CHASE. How nice of you, Peter. How did you happen to present me with violets to-day?

PETERS. What could be more inevitable? I just happened to see them and they looked so much like you.

MRS. CHASE. How sweet of you. I thought at first it might be some holiday.

PETERS. It is Columbus Day, I believe, but——

MRS. CHASE. How very patriotic, Peter. And I thought you didn't even take the trouble to vote. Are you sure it's Columbus Day? What did Columbus do on his day, anyhow?

PETERS. Why, he sailed from Spain or some such country, I believe. It dosn't matter, does it? And about my voting. I believe in voting. Think it's a duty and that sort of thing. But one is so often away on the Tuesdays following first Mondays. However, my special reason for calling this morning has nothing to do with Columbus, or Italy, or Spain——

(Telephone rings and JULIA *enters and answers it.)*

JULIA. Mr. Jenkins is at the telephone, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. How unusual. Will you excuse me for a few moments, Peter? I will take it in the other room, Julia. *(Exits left center.)*

PETERS. *(An idea striking him as* JULIA *is going out)* I say, Julia.

JULIA. *(Turning back)* Yes, sir?

PETERS. Julia, I've been calling here for quite a time, I believe.

JULIA. *(Expectantly)* Why, yes, sir, I believe you have; though I'm sure you're always welcome.

PETERS. You think so?

JULIA. I'm quite sure, sir.

PETERS. I've noticed before that you are a very observant girl, Julia, and I was intending to make

you a little gift last Christmas, but I was called out of town unexpectedly.

JULIA. *(Astonished)* Why, sir, that's almost what Mr. Jenkins said.

PETERS. Jenkins? Was he here to-day?

JULIA. He just left, sir.

PETERS. *(Taking a twenty-dollar bill from pocket-book and presenting it to her with an accustomed air)* I didn't know Jenkins came here. Perhaps this was on business?

JULIA. I'm sorry, sir, but I don't think it was business, as you might say. I don't know for sure, of course, but a girl can't help seeing some things. Oh, sir, I'm afraid twenty dollars is too much.

PETERS. Of course not. Now, if you should——

*(*MRS. CHASE *re-enters, and* JULIA *hastily puts bill into pocket and starts for door.)*

MRS. CHASE. Well, Julia, you seem to have been entertaining Mr. Peters quite successfully.

PETERS. I was inquiring about her mother, Amelia. You know my mother takes quite an interest in her.

MRS. CHASE. Why, Julia, I thought your mother was dead. Didn't you get two days off last spring on that account?

JULIA. Well, no, ma'am, she didn't exactly die that time. We thought she was going to, but she has such a constitution, as you might say.

MRS. CHASE. Very well, Julia. I'm glad she was spared to you. Nothing further now. *(Exit* JULIA.*)*

PETERS. Quite a bright girl, that.

MRS. CHASE. Yes, Peter, she has quite a bit of information about a number of things, I fancy.

PETERS. That sounds subtle, or sinister, or something, Amelia. Anyhow, I don't mind admitting that she let fall the information that Jenkins—Up Jenkins, as they call him at the club, was here before me.

Now, Amelia, I've nothing very serious against Jenkins so long as I don't have to see him, but as an old friend, I *must* urge you not to consider him in any serious light. Probably you haven't, anyhow. I could hardly imagine it. I fancy he called on business.

MRS. CHASE. He's a manufacturer of baby carriages, isn't he?

PETERS. Yes, but what of it? You haven't any babies.

MRS. CHASE. No, not at present. Anyway, it seems to be a profitable business. He told me he was worth three hundred thousand dollars, and had a good disposition.

PETERS. What execrable taste. And I don't believe he's worth a cent over a quarter of a million. As to his disposition, how could he have any left after living with that wife of his for sixteen years, even if he had one to start with, which I'll wager he didn't.

MRS. CHASE. It's only fair to say, Peter, that he wasn't exactly boasting about his wealth or his disposition. He was just arguing.

PETERS. Arguing? What?

MRS. CHASE. What is the matter with you today, Peter? You seem unusually truculent. I fear your disposition——

PETERS. *(Getting up and going over to* MRS. CHASE*)* No wonder I'm truculent, Amelia. The mere idea of that man Jenkins——

MRS. CHASE. Now, Peter, please sit down here. *(Indicates chair opposite her.)* Let's consider this matter. Here was I in my pajamas innocently trying to walk on my hands and perform other desirable exercises for the benefit of my future life—on earth, I mean—when in comes Mr. Jenkins.

PETERS. I don't doubt it. He wouldn't have the decency to have himself announced.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, it probably wasn't his fault. Moreover, he rushed out immediately at the sight of my costume.

PETERS. The idiot!

MRS. CHASE. You need not go on, Peter. Although it's true I don't look so bad in my ah—ah—costume.

PETERS. By Jove! I should say not. And that reminds me that I came here this morning to ask you just one simple question, and not to discuss that impossible Jenkins, Amelia——

MRS. CHASE. Peter! You aren't going to propose, and spoil this delightful conversation, to say nothing of——

PETERS. *(Somewhat indignantly)* Why not? You know perfectly well we are absolutely suited to each other in all kinds of ways—even if I haven't got three hundred thousand.

MRS. CHASE. But, Peter, I thought you had. Not that it is essential. I seldom think of it—except when I need it. But I need it so often. I fear we'd both miss it.

PETERS. It is convenient, I'll admit. I believe in frankness, especially with you, and I was going to tell you that I've dropped about half my money during the past few months. I thought the slump was going to end sooner, and acted accordingly.

MRS. CHASE. *(Reflectively)* Perhaps that's what Mr. Jenkins meant about your disposition——

PETERS. Do you mean to tell me that ridiculous—— Did he have the effrontery to say my disposition——

MRS. CHASE. Calm yourself, Peter, or you'll prove the truth of his suggestion.

PETERS. Amelia, I simply won't stand this. *(Takes both her hands firmly.)* You know you wouldn't really consider marrying that old dust bag, if he had twenty millions. Now let's decide whether we'll have a quiet home wedding or elope.

MRS. CHASE. *(Smiling and slowly releasing herself)* I've never realized you were so elemental, Peter. You almost persuaded me. But we're neither of us at the impulsive age any longer, and we must think of consequences.

PETERS. For one thing, there are two things you appear to have forgotten completely, and that's those two impossible Jenkins children. Could anything be more incongruous than the sight of Mrs. Amelia Jenkins and Katherine going about with——

MRS. CHASE. Peter, I don't know what you'll think, but I'm afraid I still have a lot of mother feeling in me. The thought of those poor children never having known a real mother——

PETERS. Great Heavens! You wouldn't be a real mother, and——

MRS. CHASE. I might to them.

PETERS. You don't have to marry Jenkins to be a real mother. I——

MRS. CHASE. But, Peter, you haven't any children.

PETERS. I never claimed to have. Though I should like some. But Jenkins' children. Pah!

JULIA. Mr. Jenkins is calling, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. *(To* PETERS*)* Oh, I quite forgot. He telephoned he had forgotten some important consideration, and had some amendment to discuss.

PETERS. I simply can't see that—Jenkins. I'll just go into another room, while you get rid of him. *Please* don't waste any time. Then we'll settle about the wedding. *(Goes out by door front left.)*

MRS. CHASE. Peter, I don't believe——

(Enter JULIA, *followed by* JENKINS.*)*

JULIA. Mr. Jenkins, ma'am. *(Goes out.)*

MRS. CHASE. I'm certainly complimented, Upton, to receive two calls in one morning. Won't you sit down?

JENKINS. *(Looking around room)* I'm very much relieved to find you alone. I thought—at least Julia —I mean, I feared you would not be alone.

MRS. CHASE. Did Julia say——

JENKINS. She—ah, gave me the impression some one else was calling, although she didn't say who it was.

MRS. CHASE. Mr. Peters was calling, but he isn't here now. *(Glances apprehensively at door.)*

JENKINS. Mr. Peters! I feared it. That's one reason I came back. It seemed to me I didn't make entirely plain to you the disadvantages that might well result from a marriage to Mr. Peters.

MRS. CHASE. *(Ill at ease)* But wouldn't it be better to discuss the advantages of marrying you?

JENKINS. *(Joyfully)* Then you've decided? My dear—— ·

MRS. CHASE. *(Hastily)* No, I didn't mean that. I merely meant I thought you hadn't been over that very thoroughly.

JENKINS. Very well, let us consider that first. I neglected to say with respect to my two daughters, who are of course very dear to me, that nevertheless they have reached ages when they may well be sent to a boarding school, which would relieve——

MRS. CHASE. But that would be one of the reasons which might conceivably lead me to consider—

JENKINS. My dear Amelia. What a wonderful woman you are. You are prepared to be a real mother to them?

MRS. CHASE. Please, Upton, you go too fast. I'm not sure at all. How old are they?

JENKINS. *(Embarrassed)* Why, I believe Susan —that's the older—— Let me see, she was born two years after my marriage, which was—— Dear me, I was never good at dates. *(Takes out pocketbook and consults paper, and appears to be calculating.)*

MRS. CHASE. Oh, I mean just approximately. Or

couldn't you come back to-morrow? You would have time to get everything looked up by then.

JENKINS. *(Absorbed)* No, I'll have it in a moment. Yes, Susan is just twelve.

MRS. CHASE. Quite a difficult age.

JENKINS. *(Eagerly)* But she'll soon be older, and Ella is only ten.

MRS. CHASE. But when Susan is fourteen Ella will be twelve. Besides, I can't bear either name.

JENKINS. Don't mind that. Both names could be changed. Let me see. What would you prefer? I have it. We could name Susan, Amelia, Jr.

MRS. CHASE. Horrors!

JENKINS. It's a beautiful name. *(Reflects.)* Still, perhaps it would be better to save it for—for——

(Knob of door to room in which PETERS *is begins to turn and door to open.)*

MRS. CHASE. Mr. Jenkins! *(To* PETERS.*)* Please stop. *(Door closes.)*

JENKINS. *(Somewhat bewildered)* I beg your pardon. Yes, certainly I'll stop. I do hope you'll forgive me. I——

MRS. CHASE. Perhaps we'd better discuss some other topic. How do you find business conditions?

JENKINS. *(At home with this topic)* I'm glad to find you are interested in business matters. Very few women are. Now, Mrs. Jenkins—er—as I said, few women take any interest in the important subject of business. As to present conditions, I may say that while general conditions are certainly bad, and the sale of baby carriages has fallen off one-third, you will be pleased to learn that the sale of our specialty, "Mother's Delight," has nearly doubled. This remarkable carriage is equipped with the Bemis Bouncing Balance, which is so adjusted as to counteract the efforts of the infant to spring out.

MRS. CHASE. How very interesting. And you haven't lost money in the stock market?

JENKINS. Certainly not. I never gamble. And that reminds me. I have heard on the best of authority that Mr. Peters was caught on the wrong side of the market during the recent sensational decline of Mexican Petroleum. And there's another matter, which I dislike exceedingly to mention to one who has been sheltered from the unpleasant side of life, were it not that I feel it to be no less than my duty. Do——

MRS. CHASE. *(Looking at door)* I think I'd rather hear about the new baby carriage.

JENKINS. Such preference is an excellent indication of your refinement, Amelia, but I feel that I must go on. Do you happen to have heard of a certain person—an actress named Mazie Mallory? But no, of course no respectable person would know her.

*(*PETERS *throws door open and rushes in, evidently very angry.)*

PETERS. I do know the girl you refer to, Mr. Jenkins, and I must really ask you to be careful what you say about her. If you had had the good fortune to know a few women like Miss Mallory you'd be a damned sight more—— *(Controlling himself.)* Pardon me, Amelia, but you'll admit——

JENKINS. I wish you to know, sir——

MRS. CHASE. Please, please. You both seem to have forgotten that I am here.

PETERS. Forgive me, Amelia.

JENKINS. My dear Amelia, you must excuse my severity, although you will admit it was not without cause. *(Looks coldly at* PETERS.*)* And now perhaps Mr. Peters will explain his presence in your—your——

MRS. CHASE. It was the bathroom, I fear.

JENKINS. Bathroom! I never heard of such effrontery.

PETERS. I will thank you, Jenkins, to keep your thoughts to yourself. Neither Mrs. Chase nor I care to listen to them. I may say, Amelia, that I mistook your bathroom for your bedroom, and——

JENKINS. Bedroom! I should say that was even more inexcusable. And I must say, Amelia, I don't quite understand your attitude in this matter, although——

MRS. CHASE. I think it's hardly necessary for you to understand, Mr. Jenkins. I really think it will be better not to continue this conversation at this time.

JENKINS. *(Taking his hat)* I think you are right. I have no doubt it will be better for me to call to-morrow, which I will try to do. We can then, I trust, continue the discussion which was so unfortunately interrupted. *(Looks significantly at* PETERS.*)* I ought to say, however, that I have in mind a somewhat different idea with respect to my property.

MRS. CHASE. I quite agree. Good-bye.

JENKINS. Good-bye, Amelia. Perhaps it would be best for you to communicate with me by letter.

MRS. CHASE. Yes. Or perhaps the telephone would be better. You may expect to hear from me to-morrow. *(He goes out.)*

PETERS. Thank heaven that's done. How you could ever have given a thought to that idiot, even partly in jest, is more——

MRS. CHASE. Calm yourself, Peter. He really isn't as bad as he seems to you. He has some good qualities, and then there's Katherine. She is getting quite beyond my income. I fear, Peter, you do not bring out Mr. Jenkins' good qualities.

PETERS. He hasn't any good ones. But let's forget him. *(Seriously.)* Amelia, I believe there's no use putting things off. Don't you think it would be better for us to get married quietly at once? I'm

afraid you'll marry anyone who turns up, on account of Katherine.

MRS. CHASE. *(Seriously)* Peter, dear, I *have* to think of Katherine. Perhaps I ought not to, but she's become so accustomed to having all sorts of luxuries, and is so incapable of getting along without them—my fault, I'll agree—that I must think of her. Do you realize that she's seventeen! And then, think of ourselves—our delightful relationship. We don't want to spoil it. We're both used to luxuries and you've been a free and independent bachelor for a long time.

PETERS. But I could change, I'm sure.

MRS. CHASE. It's not so easy for an old leopard like you, Peter, to substitute stripes for spots. Especially with your income so much reduced.

(Enter JULIA.*)*

JULIA. Professor Willing is calling, ma'am.

MRS. CHASE. Professor Willing? How delightful! Tell him to wait, Julia.

JULIA. Yes, ma'am. *(Goes out.)*

PETERS. Is that John Willing?

MRS. CHASE. I think so, Peter.

PETERS. *(Walking about)* I didn't know you knew him. Is he—that is——

MRS. CHASE. I don't know, Peter. I haven't known him long, but he seems very nice. *(Reflectively.)* I suppose he's poor, like most teachers.

PETERS. Poor! I should say not. On the contrary, he's heavily endowed. Must be worth a million. But——

MRS. CHASE. A million! Why, how surprising. I always had the idea that professors, though cultured and that sort of thing, were inclined to be poor. A million! That's four times three hundred thousand, isn't it? *(She appears to be considering deeply.)*

PETERS. Not quite. But it's fifteen times what I've got. However, it doesn't matter. He's very young, anyway. Not over thirty-two. *(Takes her hands.)* Let's discuss more important things. I do hope you'll agree with me, Amelia, that a quiet wedding is best. So just tell me when, and I'll go and see about a license and a lot of other things. And we mustn't keep Willing waiting longer.

MRS. CHASE. *(With sudden resolution)* No, we mustn't keep him waiting. I'm sorry, Peter, dear, but I simply can't do it. I don't dare run the risk of spoiling our delightful friendship and substituting what might be an unsuccessful marriage—— Peter, what is one-fifteenth of a million?

PETERS. *(Releasing her hands and smiling just the least bit cynically)* Whatever it is—I'm afraid it wouldn't be enough. Well, let's be friends, just as before. I don't believe John—or Upton—or—or anybody, will object.

MRS. CHASE. Peter! What are you going to do?

PETERS. Go back to the stock market. I ought to be especially lucky now.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, Peter! If you are, you'll let me know, won't you?

PETERS. *(Smiling)* I might. Good-bye.

*(*PETERS *goes out and* JULIA *enters with flowers.)*

JULIA. Prof. Willing couldn't wait, ma'am, but he left these flowers——

MRS. CHASE. How perfectly darling! Let me have them. What taste he has!

JULIA. Yes, ma'am. He said to tell you——

MRS. CHASE. Wait a minute, till I put these in water. How wonderfully expensive they look.

JULIA. Yes, ma'am.

(Telephone rings. MRS. CHASE *answers it, holding flowers in hand.)*

MRS. CHASE. Hello! Oh, how do you do? It's so long since I've heard your voice, Mr. Ames—— What did you say? The wire buzzes so. Which do I prefer, purple orchids or American Beauties? Oh, Mr. Ames—how perfectly wonderful. Wait a minute—— *(She rises, leaving the receiver hanging. To* JULIA.*)*

MRS. CHASE. Julia, this is a moment. Purple orchids or American Beauties—or these darling gardenias. It's so hard to choose.

JULIA. Oh, ma'am. Orchids and American Beauties? He must be awful rich.

MRS. CHASE. Oh, he is. He has millions. Flowers like that are nothing to him. But they're a lot to me. They must mean—everything. He wouldn't want to send them unless—Julia, I think he wants to marry me. What shall I do?

JULIA. Well, ma'am, why not marry him?

MRS. CHASE. I would, but there's Professor Willing. He's such a charming man.

JULIA. Yes, but——

MRS. CHASE. And a million is quite enough, isn't it?

JULIA. Yes, ma'am, it would be for me, but——

MRS. CHASE. But millions are better, aren't they? I know what I'm going to do. *(She seizes telephone again.)* Dear Mr. Ames, why are you so good to me? Because of old times? Oh, you mean—— What's that? You're going away? For five years? The flowers are to say farewell for you? Oh! In that case I don't care which it is. I hate orchids and roses make me sneeze. Good-bye. *(Hangs up receiver.)* Julia, these are the loveliest flowers I ever saw. Put them in water at once. And don't bruise them, the dear things. I must write to John at once. Do you know where he lives, Julia? I want you to take a note to him. I must see him before the day is over.

JULIA. Yes'm. I know where he lives. He told me. He asked me to bring him an answer to his message.

MRS. CHASE. His message! What message?

JULIA. His message to Miss Katherine. The flowers are for her. He wants to call on her to-night.

MRS. CHASE. Katherine? Oh! *(She tosses the flowers carelessly on to the divan. She speaks severely.)* Julia, I have been interrupted quite enough this morning. Please call Mr. Jenkins and tell him I shall not be at home again for a month. No, make it a week. *(She goes out while* JULIA *calls a number on the telephone, but does not get it. In a few moments* MRS. CHASE *reappears in a charming lingerie costume which is mostly knickerbockers.)*

MRS. CHASE. Julia, I must get walking on my hands to-day. *(She turns a cart-wheel.)* Anyway, I've got that thing at last.

JULIA. Ain't you going to marry again?

MRS. CHASE. *(Reflectively)* Well—I might.

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